

# KNOWING GOD DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

## Introduction

This guide was created for people who want to facilitate—or are thinking about facilitating—an Explore God Discussion Group.

This guide will get you up-to-speed on what a discussion group is and what it takes to facilitate one. We'll address common questions from facilitators and outline the content for the Knowing God series.



**Making an Introduction**



**God & Prayer**



**God & Scripture**



**God & Community**

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# KNOWING GOD

## DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

# Overview and Facilitator FAQs

## 1 What is an Explore God Discussion Group?

**An Explore God Discussion Group is about having honest conversations in a respectful environment that encourages questions and authenticity.**

An Explore God group is an opportunity for people to come together to ask, consider, and discuss challenging questions about their beliefs. A Discussion Group Facilitator will do the following:

- Invite questions
- Create conversation
- Promote self-discovery
- Encourage spiritual growth

## 2 Can anyone be a Discussion Group Facilitator?

**If you can be hospitable, push play on a video, and ask questions, you can be a Discussion Group Facilitator.**

One of the most important things a facilitator can do is create a welcoming environment. Here are some ways to do just that:

- Match the space to the size of the group.
- Provide snacks.
- Reduce distractions.
- Consider video requirements.
- Look at the videos and questions ahead of time.
- Ask open-ended questions that fuel discussion.
- Arrive early and stay late.

### 3 Who should I invite to an Explore God Discussion Group?

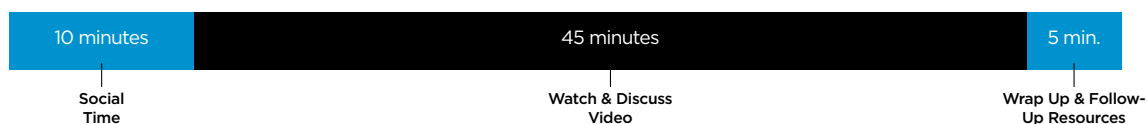
**Explore God Discussion Groups are for just about anybody.**

- Aim for 2-10 participants.
- Build trust by investing in relationships beforehand.
- Include people with different spiritual perspectives.
- Invite people who have something in common.
- Tailor the invitation so it feels natural.

### 4 What happens during an Explore God Discussion Group?

**Explore God Discussion Groups are highly customizable and can be done in a variety of formats.**

Please customize this example to meet the needs of your group.



### 5 How can I make this a great experience for everyone?

**Keep in mind that you are a facilitator, not a teacher.**

The goal of an Explore God Discussion Group is to create a safe place where people can seek credible answers to challenging spiritual questions.

- Foster honest questions in a respectful environment.
- Encourage discussion instead of teaching.
- Be honest. You don't need to have all the answers.

# KNOWING GOD

## DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

### 1

## Session One: Making an Introduction

### Social Time

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following Introduction.

### Introduction

When all is said and done, what does it really mean to be a Christian? Is Christianity just about following a set of rules and crossing off a to-do list? It sure seems that way sometimes. But what if it's meant to be something different than that? What if, rather than burdening us with a load of rules, being a Christ-follower was actually meant to set us free? What would that kind of Christianity look like? Let's watch this film and then tackle these questions for ourselves.

### Video: *The Curiosity Collective: Making an Introduction*

This is a ten-minute collection of subject matter experts discussing the topic of making an introduction to God, Jesus, and what it means to be a Christ-follower. It displays the various questions, struggles, and perspectives of these individuals regarding this week's topic. See what they have to say and discuss it.

### Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- What do you think when you hear the term "Christianity"? What about the term "Christ-follower"? Do the two mean something different to you?

- Why do you think it's so common to believe that Christianity is a list of dos and don'ts, a rulebook of what you can and can't do?
- Have you ever thought of God as a kind of "police officer in the sky" like J. P. did?
- In the video, Lysa said that she felt like a "throw-away person." Have you felt this way? How do you think God's gift of grace can affect these feelings?
- Lysa went on to say, "Maybe following God didn't mean I had to perfectly follow the rules. Maybe that's not really what it's all about. Maybe loving God means accepting his love for me." What does that idea mean to you? Do you agree with Lysa?

## Wrap-Up

### Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group's discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

Rather than hand us a rulebook, Jesus provided assurance of God's unconditional love. Following Jesus is about restoring our relationship with God—accepting his offer of love and grace—not about jumping through hoops and hoping we measure up to his standards. No matter where you've been, what you've done, or who you've wronged, God is anxiously awaiting your return. Simply making an introduction can initiate an amazing journey of discovering God's love for us.

### Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you'll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.

## Explore More on Knowing God

The following resources are designed for deeper exploration into the topic of knowing God. If you are doing this series offline, you can e-mail these resources to your group after the session for further exploration. Simply copy this section and paste it into an e-mail.

### Videos

- The Danger of Seeking God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/the-danger-of-seeking-god-video>)
- Connecting with God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/connecting-with-god-video>)

### Articles

- How Can I Know God?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/how-can-i-know-god>)
- What Is Grace?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/what-is-grace>)

### Stream of Daily Inspiration

- 50 Profound Reflections About God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/50-profound-reflections-about-god>)

### Recommended Book

- *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis  
(<http://amzn.to/1LoOd4i>)

### Additional Content on Knowing God

- “Knowing God,” Explore God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/knowing-god>)

### Take Action

Consider your thoughts on who Jesus is. What are some of the defining characteristics you think of? Write down three ways you could embody these characteristics in your daily life. Make an effort to do so this week.

# KNOWING GOD

## DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

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## Session Two: God & Prayer

### Social Time

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following Introduction.

### Introduction

When you meet a new person, how do you get to know them? Fundamentally, you talk to them. You spend time with them. Well, if there is a God—a personal, knowable God—how do we get to know him? We talk to him. As you may know, the act of talking to God is often called “prayer.” That sounds simple enough. But what is prayer, exactly? And how do you do it? How do you talk to someone who doesn’t necessarily talk back to you—audibly, at least? Is there a certain protocol we need to follow to talk to God? What does prayer look like—and how can we know if God is listening? Let’s take a look at this film and then discuss it together.

### Video: *The Curiosity Collective: God & Prayer*

This is a ten-minute collection of subject matter experts discussing the topic of God and prayer. It displays the various questions, struggles, and perspectives of these individuals regarding this week’s topic. See what they have to say and discuss it.

### Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There’s no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?

- In the video, Angie said, “I wanted to know—how do you do it? How do you do prayer? What does it look like? What are the rules? What are the steps?” Have you ever asked yourself or others questions like Angie asked?
- Are there ways in which following “steps” or a “ritual” can be helpful for learning something new? Do you think this could apply to prayer?
- Do you ever feel that you need to “fix yourself” before you talk to God?
- Do you tend to approach prayer more as something where you “stop and talk to God for a half-hour” or as a constant activity you do throughout your day?
- How might you differentiate between your own thoughts and feelings and God’s answers to your prayers?

## Wrap-Up

### Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group’s discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

One of God’s mysterious qualities is his ability to be intimate and yet immense, empathetic and yet all-powerful. Like Hugh said, it can often seem weird to think that if we speak, the creator of the universe is actually hearing us. We may even wonder, “Why God would want to talk to me?” And yet, God desires personal relationship with each of us. It is clear from Scripture that prayer is key to maintaining a relationship with God; even Jesus himself regularly retreated for extended times of prayer. It is through the gift of this communication that we can come to know God personally and more fully.

### Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you’ll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.



## Explore More on God & Prayer

The following resources are designed for deeper exploration into the topic of prayer. If you are doing this series offline, you can e-mail these resources to your group after the session for further exploration. Simply copy this section and paste it into an e-mail.

### Videos

- How Can We Know God?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/how-can-we-know-god-video>)
- Does God Speak to Us?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/does-god-speak-to-us-video>)

### Articles

- How Do I Pray?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/how-do-i-pray>)
- Does Prayer Work?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/does-prayer-work>)

### Stream of Daily Inspiration

- 40 Inspirational Readings for New Christians  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/40-inspirational-readings-for-new-christians>)

### Recommended Book

- *Prayer: Finding the Heart's True Home*, Richard J. Foster  
(<http://amzn.to/16Ugtuo>)

### Additional Content on Prayer

- "Prayer," Explore God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/prayer>)

### Take Action

Experiment with ways that make prayer most comfortable to you. Perhaps that means speaking out loud, journaling, singing, or thinking silently. If you're not sure how to start, consider taking a look at the Lord's Prayer, found in Matthew 6:9-13. These verses show how Jesus taught his followers to pray. As a result, the Lord's Prayer is important to Christians at all stages of their prayer life.

# KNOWING GOD

## DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

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## Session Three: God & Scripture

### Social Time

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following Introduction.

### Introduction

Most people would agree that the Bible is an important piece of literature, an influential text that has lasted millennia. But is it any more than that? Is it more than literature, or history, or art? Is the Bible truly Scripture—God's written word? If so, how should we approach the Bible? Should we study it like a textbook or treat it as a manual for life? Perhaps even more pressing than all those questions are these: Why should we bother reading the Bible at all? Is it even relevant to life today? What can we learn from it? Let's watch today's video and then discuss it together.

### Video: *The Curiosity Collective: God & Scripture*

This is a ten-minute collection of subject matter experts discussing the topic of Scripture. It displays the various questions, struggles, and perspectives of these individuals regarding this week's topic. See what they have to say and discuss it.

### Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- If someone asked you to describe the Bible, how would you respond?

- What biases—positive or negative—do you have about the Bible?
- In the video, Micah said, “The Bible was not necessarily written just for information; it was written for transformation.” What does that mean to you?
- Do you think the Bible is still relevant to life today? If so, what areas of your life might the Bible impact?
- Can you think of a time when you’ve been surprised by the way the Bible seemed to have something particular to say to you, like David mentioned?
- Jo said that she learned who Jesus was through the Bible. What do you believe you can learn about God through the story of the Bible?

## Wrap-Up

### Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group’s discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

More than a simple book, the Bible is a collection of letters, songs, laws, history, poetry, and prophecy that paints a vivid and complex picture of God’s relationship with creation. When looked at as a whole, the stories in the Bible tell a grand, overarching story about God and humanity. Through its pages, we get a glimpse of God’s character and his redeeming love for all of mankind, for each of us. For Christians, the Bible is not just about God’s past activity in the world. It’s more personal than that. The Bible is the story of God’s present activity in the lives of every person.

### Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you’ll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.

## Explore More on God & Scripture

The following resources are designed for deeper exploration into the topic of Scripture. If you are doing this series offline, you can e-mail these resources to your group after the session for further exploration. Simply copy this section and paste it into an e-mail.

### Videos

- Is Today's Bible Authentic?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/is-todays-bible-authentic-video>)
- How Should We Read the Bible?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/how-should-we-read-the-bible-video>)

### Articles

- What Is the History of the Bible?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/history-of-the-bible>)
- How to Read the Bible  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/how-to-read-the-bible>)

### Stream of Daily Inspiration

- 40 Most Popular Bible Verses  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/40-most-popular-bible-verses>)

### Recommended Book

- *Eat This Book*, Eugene H. Peterson  
(<http://amzn.to/ljcbuxV>)

### Additional Content on the Bible

- "Bible," Explore God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/bible>)

### Take Action

The Bible can seem very overwhelming—especially when you're just looking for a place to start. Often, people find that starting at the beginning (the book of Genesis) isn't necessarily the best way to read the Bible. Many people recommend, as Micah did in the film, that a first-time reader start in the book of John. Take some time this week to begin investigating the story of Jesus as told in the Gospel of John.

# KNOWING GOD

## DISCUSSION GROUP GUIDE

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## Session Four: God & Community

### Social Time

Take ten minutes for the group to get acquainted or catch up over snacks and refreshments. Then, after gathering everyone into a comfortable circle, share something like the following Introduction.

### Introduction

In today's highly independent and individualistic world, it's easy to see one's faith as a purely personal and private experience. But does this kind of perspective limit our spiritual growth? Do we really need others in our lives—even our spiritual lives? Can being around those we admire and respect lead to positive change in our own characters, habits, and thoughts? If we remain too introspective, we can miss out on the incredible experience of community, of growing in our relationships with others and with God.

### Video: *The Curiosity Collective: God & Community*

This is a ten-minute collection of subject matter experts discussing the topic of community. It displays the various questions, struggles, and perspectives of these individuals regarding this week's topic. See what they have to say and discuss it.

### Questions for Discussion

After watching the video, choose from this list of questions or ask some of your own to facilitate discussion. There's no need to limit your discussion to these questions or to feel pressured to cover all of them in the time you have.

- In what ways can you identify with any of the stories in this video? What did you find intriguing or compelling?
- Can you think of a time in your life when being around others changed your behavior, your thoughts, or your mind-set—either for better or for worse?

- Do you agree that we were created for community? Can you share a time when you felt that you needed others or a time when a friend or family member needed you?
- Does keeping our faith personal and private limit our spiritual growth? How can gathering in community with others help us to discover more about ourselves and God?
- Looking at your life today, who most encourages and challenges your faith? Is there someone you see as a mentor?
- What do you think of the concept of the church as a family? Have you ever experienced anything like that?
- What steps could you take to become more connected to a faith community?

## Wrap-Up

### Thoughts to Share with the Group

To the best of your ability, summarize the main points of your group's discussion. Or, if you are more comfortable, use the text below as a launching pad for concluding the session.

The Christian faith is meant to be lived in relationship with others—both fellow believers and nonbelievers. When we come together with other Christians, we are each challenged and encouraged to live out our faith more fully. We can come to reach a better understanding of what it means to be God's family. Fellowship with other believers naturally leads to personal spiritual growth. At the same time, community with nonbelievers can strengthen our understanding of God and our relationship with him. Any time we come together with other people is an opportunity to live out the love of God. Through the time we spend together, we can come to know more about each other, ourselves, and God.

### Follow-Up Resources

As you wrap up this session, share or summarize these bullets:

- Inform the group that you'll be sending some follow-up resources so people can continue to explore God.
- Thank people for joining the discussion, and invite them to stick around if they want to continue the conversation.

Since it's the last formal group discussion, invite people to share responses to a few parting questions:

- How have you grown in your spiritual journey over the past four sessions?
- How have others in the group affected you?

### Some Notes

Set the tone by sharing first. Be sure to include ways that your faith has been challenged, ignited, or stretched. You might thank members of the group for specific ways they have encouraged you. Remember to model using as few words as possible so as to maximize their impact and allow plenty of time for others to share.

You may also want to plan a social gathering after the group has finished. This is a great way to honor and continue to explore God.

## Explore More on God & Community

The following resources are designed for deeper exploration into the topic of community and spiritual growth. If you are doing this series offline, you can e-mail these resources to your group after the session for further exploration. Simply copy this section and paste it into an e-mail.

### Videos

- Sharing Faith with Others  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/sharing-faith-with-others-video>)
- Designed to Share  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/designed-to-share-video>)

### Articles

- Do I Have to Go to Church?  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/do-i-have-to-go-to-church>)
- Spiritual Mentors  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/spiritual-mentors>)

### Stream of Daily Inspiration

- 40 Inspirational Readings on Loneliness  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/40-inspirational-readings-on-loneliness>)

### Recommended Book

- *Life Together*, Dietrich Bonhoeffer  
(<http://amzn.to/1ZgdXlK>)

### Additional Content on the Bible

- “Spiritual Growth,” Explore God  
(<http://www.exploreGod.com/spiritual-growth>)

### Take Action

Meeting in a discussion group is an excellent way to incorporate community into your life. Now that the Knowing God series is over, think of ways you can continue to meet together as a group. Perhaps you'd like to do another study. A variety of topical studies can be created using Explore God resources. If your group cannot continue to meet, make an effort to think of other ways to plug in to Christian community. Perhaps try out a new church, go to a Sunday School class, or volunteer with a local organization.